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TITLE: A Venue-based Method for Sampling Hard-to-reach Young Men Who have Sex with Men: Example from an HIV Community-level Intervention

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ISSUE: Obtaining representative samples of young men who have sex with men (YMSM) is challenging. Traditional survey sampling methods (e.g., telephone surveys or mailing lists) would likely yield a small and biased sample of eligible respondents, and men who attend gay-identified clubs and bars will represent those that are at least 21.

SETTING: Evaluation of CDC's Community Intervention Trial for Youth (CITY) in 13 communities.

PROJECT: The baseline data collection wave is scheduled for Summer 1999. The CITY project will sample at venues where YMSM congregate, e.g., bars, clubs, coffee shops, parks, bookstores, street corners. The sampling method is based on earlier CDC work (the Young Men's Survey). The strategy is designed to achieve sufficient coverage and minimal bias. Sampling procedures include the following steps: 1) Ethnographic techniques are used to identify potential venues, and the specific times and days of the week when YMSM are present in appreciable numbers. 2) For each venue, the hours of operation are divided into four-hour segments which are evaluated for inclusion into the sampling frame. This evaluation is based on the number of YMSM at the venue likely to be in the targeted age range, and the likelihood of enrolling participants for brief interviews. 3) Within each community, the venue day-time periods are entered into a sampling frame stratified by venue size and then randomly selected. 4) At or near each selected venue, based on observed foot traffic, an "intercept line or area" is set. 5) All potential respondents who cross the intercept line are "clicked." Those "clicked" are approached and asked to participate in the study, depending on interviewer availability. If eligible, the respondent is enrolled in the study, and, if he consents, the interview proceeds in a private area near the venue.

RESULTS: This strategy should produce a more representative sample of the YMSM who attend venues. The target enrollment is 250 respondents for each of the 13 communities per wave (total sample size Of 3250, including at least 80 distinct venues).

LESSONS LEARNED: Lessons include the advantages and disadvantages of these procedures, and how these techniques can be adapted by other investigators conducting community-level interventions targeting hard to sample populations.

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